

# **MINUTES OF THE CITY PLANNING COMMISSION**

## **J. MARTIN GRIESEL CONFERENCE ROOM**

**July 28, 2000**

**9:00 AM**

**Present:** Appointed Members: Terry Hankner; Jacquelyn McCray, Donald Mooney; Administration: Richard Mendes, Deputy City Manager; City Council Representative: James Tarbell; City Planning Staff: Elizabeth Blume, Director, City Planning Department; Steven Kurtz, Administrator, Land Use Management

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Mooney.

### **PROPOSED SALE OF PROPERTY LOCATED AT GILBERT AND ELSINORE AVENUES IN WALNUT HILLS**

Action requested: Approve the conveyance of City-owned real property to the Cincinnati Museum Center with the condition that the final conveyance should not occur until any and all objections identified through the Coordinated Report process are removed.

Steven Kurtz, Administrator, Land Use Management, presented the staff report, relating that, in 1957, the City granted control and use of the property in question (formerly controlled by the Park Board) to the Society of Natural History to operate a museum. As a result of a 1995 merger, these rights were acquired by the Cincinnati Museum Center. The use of the property was restricted to educational and cultural purposes by the language of Ordinance 215-1957. While the Cincinnati Museum Center currently houses some collections and its research operations in the former Museum of Natural History on Gilbert Avenue, the facility is in need of improvements and no longer meets the needs of the Museum Center.

The Episcopal Diocese of Southern Ohio has formed a group to establish an elementary school in downtown Cincinnati. They have identified the former museum site as a preferred location for the school in order to attract a diversity of children. The proposal is for the City to convey the property to the Museum Center without competitive bid; the Museum Center will then sell the property to the Episcopal Diocese for use as an independent elementary school. In return, the Episcopal Diocese will provide the Museum Center with a new facility on Gest Street. The total cost of the Museum Center project is approximately \$8-million, of which the Museum Center will

contribute \$1.5-million. (Deputy City Solicitor Ely Ryder reiterated that the economic benefit of this transaction would be to the Museum Center, rather than the City of Cincinnati.)

This plan for re-use of the former Museum of Natural History site is consistent with the provisions of Ordinance 215-1957. Staff recommends approval.

The Chair recognized Terry Heckenmuller of the Museum Center. She stated there have been other proposals for re-use of the Gilbert and Elsinore property that did not meet the re-use restrictions. The beauty of this proposal is that the school use meets the restrictions and the Diocese has \$6.5-million available to move their facility to Gest Street.

Jane MacKnight (also representing the Museum Center) stated the new facility will provide better workspace, security and climate controls for collection and storage functions.

In response to Commission questions regarding the types of physical changes that will be necessitated by the proposed re-use, Board Member of the Episcopal School Bob Hansel related that the main alteration will be the addition of windows.

Mr. Hankner offered a motion to approve the staff recommendation. Chairman Mooney stated he would abstain from voting on this proposal, as his wife is a member of the Museum Center's Board of Trustees. Ms. McCray seconded the motion, and it was approved by a vote of 4-0-1 (ayes: Hankner, McCray, Mendes, Tarbell; nays: none; abstaining: Mooney).

## **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business to consider, the meeting was adjourned.

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Elizabeth A. Blume, Director  
City Planning Department

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Donald J. Mooney  
City Planning Commission

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_